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Email to Allison.RuffSchuurman@asm.ca.gov and csend@cwda.org

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[DATE]

The Honorable Anthony Portantino, Chair

Senate Appropriations Committee

State Capitol, Room 3086

Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: AB 531 (Friedman) Achieving the Vision of Extended Foster Care** **- SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Portantino:

 On behalf of [Your Organization], I am writing in support of AB 531 (Friedman), which seeks to ensure that the Extended Foster Youth Program (EFC) has sufficient capacity and supports to ensure that all eligible youth who opt to participate can take full advantage of the transition to independence opportunities offered by the program.

[Insert paragraph about your organization]

California was among the first states to opt into a federal opportunity to create an Extended Foster Care (EFC) program in 2010, serving foster youth ages 18-21. The EFC Program represented a historic expansion of services to foster youth, intended to address the poor outcomes faced by youth as they emancipate from the foster care system at age 18. According to the CalYOUTH study, which has measured the impact of extended foster care, California youth have reaped many benefits as a result of EFC including improvements in education, employment, housing, and social support, as well as reductions in pregnancy and criminal justice system involvement. However, the CalYOUTH study also reveals that over 35 percent of youth reported they experienced homelessness while actively enrolled in extended foster care. California’s high housing costs, coupled with youth who are unprepared for our state’s tight housing market, has led to housing instability and homelessness among youth with have an obligation to support and house. In order to achieve the vision of EFC, it is critical to invest in increased: (1) child welfare worker capacity and (2) housing availability and supports to ensure that all of the young people that want to participate in the EFC program can take full advantage of the program.

AB 531 makes these investments and increases the housing options available to youth participating in the extended foster care program by: (1) creating housing navigators to aid youth in locating and securing appropriate housing and support transitions to independence; (2) requiring counties to examine and report on their ability to meet the immediate housing needs of youth who are re-entering extended foster care or who are moving to a new placement; (3) developing capacity to meet the immediate housing needsof young adults who are re-entering extended foster care or who are moving to a new placement; (4) streamlining the SILP approval process; (5) promoting placement stability by requiring counties to “hold” placements for up to 14 days if the youth has provided notice of intent to return within 14 days or the program has reason to believe the youth will be returning; and, (5) restructuring the host family transitional housing model to allow families already licensed as a resource family to be eligible to serve as a host family and to divide the THP payment between the caregiver, youth and provider to promote budgeting skills, allow for saving for future living expenses, and promote the provision of transitional independent living skills services.

The primary purpose of extended foster care is help youth prepare for their successful transition into adulthood. However, without sufficient supports from skilled social workers and lacking appropriate housing, the vision of extended foster care is falling flat. AB 531 will ensure that all youth who are eligible to participate in extended foster care receive the full support of the program.

For these reasons, we are pleased to support AB 531 and respectfully request your AYE vote in committee. Please contact me [insert your contact information] if you have questions regarding our position.

Sincerely,

[Name]

[Title]

cc: The Honorable Laura Friedman

Members and Staff, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Joe Parra, Senate Republican Caucus

 Tam Ma, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom